

Carers' Self Advocacy Toolkit

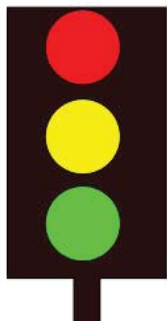
Dealing with anger



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Anger can be better controlled if you recognise it and own it and express it without doing damage. A key thing is to pay attention to your anger so that it doesn't escalate out of control. Taking responsibility for your anger will help you take positive action.

Dealing with unhelpful anger - the Traffic Light Skills



Red skills – in the heat of the moment

This is when you are feeling overwhelmed by anger and the 'fight or flight' instincts are there. This is not the time to act; it's the time to make a space for you to cool down. It's best not to say anything you are going to regret at this time. Cooling down is not being passive as it helps you think clearly and work out how to act assertively. So:

- Watch out for any personal warning signs of your growing anger
- Stop what you are doing
- Take yourself away from the situation
- Focus on your breathing

- Count up to a number that gives you the time to feel calmer

Orange skills – thinking things through

Orange skills help you *understand* your anger and hopefully to develop your anger into something more constructive.

Once you are not in the grip of anger, think about your own anger. Rather than think about what someone did or said to make you angry, look at what was triggered in *you* that brought about the unpleasant thoughts feelings and actions?

- Identify what things have triggered your anger in the past. There are three levels to this:
 - The **external setting**, for example a hot or a noisy place, crowds, traffic
 - Your **internal state**, fatigue, stress, lack of sleep, feeling frustrated, being hungry, not feeling well
 - Your **personal flashpoints** such as feeling unfairly treated, being put down, being ignored, not being included

- Try and find out what is causing the underlying pain to your anger. This could be fear, unhappiness anxiety about something happening in your life. For example, a carer could lose his temper with his partner's care manager when his partner wanders off, as he is frightened that the care manager will say she needs to move in to residential care.
- Try and step back from your emotions. What would a stranger observe about you if they could read your thoughts?
- What are your 'rules'? These are the beliefs you have about how others *should* behave towards you. Which rule has been violated that has caused the anger? How did this hurt you e.g. maybe you felt disrespected or ignored.
- Question whether your rules are ones you want to keep.

Green skills – going ahead with care

- State what has upset you clearly to the person concerned and try and do this as soon as possible. Own the problem "I was told that I couldn't have respite and this made me feel powerless and frustrated."
- Ask for what you want using assertiveness techniques that are available as part of the Carers Self-Advocacy Toolkit.
- Find out what the other person is thinking and listen to what they say, putting your reservations on hold.

Try not to

- Accuse and recriminate, shout or yell
- Make your criticisms seem personal
- Label people or call them names
- Moan and groan to others
- Bring in other issues